

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE:	Washington
COUNTY:	King
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY DATE	OCT 9 1974

## 1. NAME

COMMON:

Paramount Theatre

AND/OR HISTORIC:

## 2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:

901 Pine Street

CITY OR TOWN:

Seattle

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:

#7 - Honorable Brock Adams

STATE

Washington

CODE

53

COUNTY:

King

CODE

033

## 3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No			

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific		

## 4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:

A. H. Clise, Paramount Building Corp of Seattle Inc.

STREET AND NUMBER:

300 Securities Building, 3rd at Stewart Street

CITY OR TOWN:

Seattle

STATE:

Washington

CODE

53

## 5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:

King County Administration Building, Assessor's Office

STREET AND NUMBER:

4th Avenue and James Street

CITY OR TOWN:

Seattle

STATE

Washington

CODE

53

## 6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

None

DATE OF SURVEY:

☐ Federal☐ State☒ County☐ Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

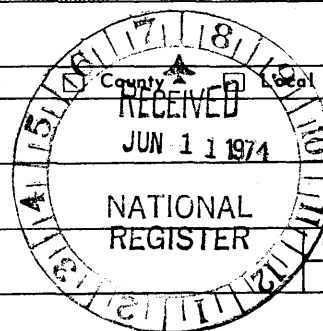
CITY OR TOWN:

STATE:

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

CODE

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## 7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

(Check One)

☐ Excellent ☒ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Deteriorated ☐ Ruins ☐ Unexposed

(Check One)

☐ Altered ☒ Unaltered

(Check One)

☐ Moved ☒ Original Site

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Paramount Theatre of Seattle, along with a sister structure in Portland, is a variation of the Paramount Theatre in New York City. Seattle's Paramount was designed by Northwest architects Marcus Pritteca and F. J. Peters. Financing was arranged through the W. S. Hammond Company (New York) by L. N. Rosenbaum of Seattle. Adolph Zukor, a well-known leader in the film industry at the time, assisted in the development.

Standing from five to eight stories high, this dominant rectilinear structure covers nearly half of a city block. Construction began in 1926, and little expense was spared. The theatre opened on the night of March 1, 1928.

The front of the building stands eight stories high whereas the remaining sections are five stories. The front facade borders Pine Street and the long side faces 9th Avenue. The main entrance has a central box office flanked on each side by three multipaned double doors. Another similar set of doors behind these form an entry lock. A triangular marquee projects over the front, and three large semi-circular windows rise above the entrance. The remainder of the first story facing Pine Street is occupied by a cafe and tavern.

Rows of windows are located on the higher stories on two sides of the building. Balustrades, cartouches, multipaned windows, decorative trefoil arches, frieze bands, fancy cornices and cresting distinguish the building and create a light textured appearance against the dark red brick.

The lower two stories on the 9th Avenue side are covered with stone tile, which is accentuated by cartouches, decorated frieze bands, ornamental cornices, and three large semi-circular archways. Wrought-iron fire escapes form a maze-like texture against the red brick on the rear portion of this side.

The back of the building has a faded advertisement painted on the upper portion which advertises the Paramount Theatre. While the majority of the theatre is well executed, the alley side is typical "alley," with various loading docks, fire escapes, and utility outlets.

The interior of the theatre is done in blues, golds, and browns creating a rich luxurious decor. Entering the foyer from the entry lock, stairs curve down from the first story balcony along beige and black panelled marble walls. Ironwork railings capped with wood complete the elegance of these stairways. A large crystal and gold chandelier is suspended from the ceiling of the three-story foyer and is eye level with the first story balcony.

The foyer extends into an area with a lowered ceiling where another chandelier hangs from the coffered roof. This area leads into the

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**#7 - Description**  
**Paramount Theatre**

four-story grand foyer where two more crystal and gold chandeliers hang from the rose, green, and gold decorated ceiling.

The north or Pine Street wall consists of five mirrors separated by marble panels, and the opposing wall across the foyer is a series of arches leading under the first story balcony to the auditorium. More balconies occur for three more stories fronting on the grand foyer and reflected by the mirrors. Walls are generally gold and have panels defined by molding strips. Archways have hanging drapery which soften the interior. The auditorium's decorative inverted domes, balconies, curtainings, and deeply carved surfaces create distortion-free sound. Seating is increasingly steep the further away from the stage. Twin bronze and crystal chandeliers flank the stage and weigh 1,900 pounds each, contain thousands of crystals, and require a total of 3,600 watts. The whole aura of the interior is one of richness and extravagance, where believing in make-believe becomes possible.



## 8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

☐ Pre-Columbian☐ 16th Century☐ 18th Century☒ 20th Century☐ 15th Century☐ 17th Century☐ 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1928

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

☐ Aboriginal☐ Education☐ Political☐ Urban Planning☐ Prehistoric☐ Engineering☐ Religion/Phi-☐ Other (Specify)☐ Historic☐ Industry☐ Philosophy☐ Agriculture☐ Invention☐ Science☒ Architecture☐ Landscape☐ Sculpture☐ Art☐ Architecture☐ Social/Human-☐ Commerce☐ Literature☐ itarian☐ Communications☐ Military☒ Theater☐ Conservation☒ Music☐ Transportation

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Paramount Theatre is representative of an era in showmanship when the design and decoration of the movie house was an integral extension of the aura of make-believe that was produced on the stage and screen. No expense was spared to create this fantasy for the American public. Ben Hall, in his book The Best Remaining Seats (1961) has stated:

It was a brief era, as golden ages go, swept in on a floodtide of splendor, fantastic architecture, music, laughter and dreams. It began and ended in the decade that lay between Prohibition and Depression and it brought pleasure and escape from boredom to a whole generation of Americans who wanted desperately to believe in make-believe.

Marcus Pritteca, already known for his adroit construction of Pantages Theatres, adapted Seattle's Paramount design from a Paramount Theatre in New York City. Pritteca's design skillfully allowed the patron to observe increasingly more of the elaborate building as the patron proceeded through the showhouse. In effect, the visual architecture was intended to be no small part of the theatrical impact.

The Paramount opened March 1, 1928, just before the great "Crash" and depression. Thus, after the end of the 1920's, there was no money to continue backing this style of theatre construction. Over the years, theatres of this type have all but disappeared from most large American cities. Seattle, however, still has a number of these elaborate showhouses, among which the Paramount is one of the more outstanding. Furthermore, an original pipe organ, built by Wurlitzer expressly for the Paramount, is still intact and in excellent condition, largely due to the efforts of the American Pipe Organ Society.

In the field of entertainment, the Paramount has always drawn outstanding performers and productions. An example would be the elaborate Fanchon and Marco Revues of Vaudeville. Currently it is the center for modern rock concerts, although lately the Paramount has seen the return of symphonies, organ concerts, and road shows.

With excellent acoustics, an extravagant interior, and a well-executed exterior, the Paramount Theatre remains today as a fine example of bygone architecture and stands as a tribute to the talent of Marcus Pritteca.

# 9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Hall, Ben. The Best Remaining Seats. New York: C. N. Potter, 1961.

Krahl, Bob, authority on theatres and sound engineer for stage shows.

Seattle Times, February 19, February 21, February 23, and February 29, 1928.

# 10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		47 ° 36 ' 49 "	122 ° 19 ' 47 "	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: One

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

10/556350  
5273350  
CD

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

# 11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:  
Erma Gain (Mrs. Fred S.)

ORGANIZATION: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: April 27, 1973

STREET AND NUMBER:  
4505 Lake Washington Boulevard N.E.

CITY OR TOWN: Kirkland STATE: Washington CODE: 53

# 12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National ☐ State ☐ Local ☒

Name Charles H. Odgaard  
Charles H. Odgaard

Title Director - Washington State  
Parks & Recreation Commission

Date March 13, 1974

# NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

ARueckert  
Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date 10/9/74

ATTEST:  
Charles Odgaard  
Keeper of The National Register

Date 10-8-74

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#8 - Significance  
Paramount Theatre

Although the Paramount Theatre is less than 50 years old, it represents a never-to-be forgotten era in the history of the theatre; structural evidence of this extension of fantasy from the stage and screen to surround the audience does not require the passage of additional time to determine its value and impact. As pointed out at the beginning of this statement, the period was brief but of unusual impact and as new theatres are marked by increasing austerity, existing theatres such as the Paramount which represent a more fanciful approach to entertainment become of greater value in appreciating an attitude now past.

